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Why We Must Maintain Troops in Europe

— pg. 2

Why U.S. Maintains Forces in Europe

By James R. Schlesinger
Secretary of Defense

It behooves us to weigh with the greatest of care the possible longer-term consequences of the various proposals now being advanced in the Congress to effect major reductions in our force deployments in Europe at this time.

Why has this issue of U.S. troops in Europe arisen? I think it is because there has been, in recent years, considerable public conflict—understandable conflict—as a result of the national frustration and disaffection over our involvement in Southeast Asia. There has grown within the country, in considerable measure as a result of that war, a feeling of weariness with the complexities and difficulties of involvement and commitment, and a hope, now that the war is all but over for the U.S. and a more profitable dialogue with the U.S.S.R. and with China has begun, that peace may at last have arrived. This mood has been accompanied by a tendency to review the entire history of the last 28 years, sometimes referred to as the period of the "cold war," and to inquire whether everything the United State has done during that period of time should not be questioned and re-examined.

I think it probably should be re-examined. We need a new public debate about what our permanent interests are and what our commitments should be. But it strikes me that NATO and Western security are inevitably numbered among the permanent interests and commitments of the United States.

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Europe, A Permanent Interest

What reasons are there to regard Western Europe as a permanent interest? The reasons, belatedly recognized in World War I and World War II, are surely well known. The hostile domination of West-

ern Europe and the control of her vast resources would be a grave danger to the security of the U.S. The loss of our considerable investments and trading opportunities would do us great economic harm. The loss of Western Europe would cause an intolerable shrinkage in the area of freedom of the world. While we could perhaps survive isolated in the Western Hemisphere, we would survive in a way that would be quite disturbing to us. We would be isolated not through any choice of our own, but because of the decisions of others. We would no longer have a choice.

Why are conventional forces important to the preservation of this interest? I assure you our troops are still in Europe, some 28 years after the end of World War II, **not** because the President wishes to incur the political costs of deploying major forces in Europe, **not** because of inertia or bad habit, **not** to save our European allies the trouble and expense of their own defense, **not** simply to maintain an American "presence," and **not** just to serve as a "trip-wire". Conventional forces in Western Europe are important:

First, because there is a large conventional threat. Whereas we are reducing our conventional forces drastically below the June 1968 level, and even considerably below the June 1964 pre-Vietnam war level, there has been no such reduction in Soviet conventional forces. The forces deployed in Eastern Europe by the Soviet Union and its allies remain undiminished, and indeed have been continuously strengthened. It would be highly imprudent for us to make decisions about U.S. forces without taking into full account Soviet military capabilities, pending the successful negotiation of limitations or reductions in the forces of both sides.

Nuclear Parity

Second, because we no longer have strategic nuclear predominance. NATO now more than ever needs a stalwart conventional capability in Europe. We no longer have that predominance in nuclear weapons which, at least through the 1950s, served to offset the Soviet Union's predominance in conventional ground forces. The Soviet Union has already achieved approximate parity with the United States in nuclear weapons. Thus, the relative weight of NATO's nuclear forces in the balance of deterrence has diminished, thereby placing a higher value on NATO's conventional capability.

Third, because it is important that we and our allies have options in responding to Soviet provocation. What we wish to ensure in our emphasis on NATO's conventional capability is that we have a range of options, a greater degree of flexibility in deterring and, if need be, in coping with a Warsaw Pact conventional attack. The way we are most likely to get engaged in a war with the Soviet Union is if it perceives a relative reluctance on the part of the NATO alliance to use nuclear weapons, coupled with an opportunity, because of superior Soviet conventional predominance, to make a low-risk military move. We want to avoid placing ourselves in a position where our only viable option in the event of a major Warsaw Pact conventional attack is an early recourse to the use of nuclear weapons. I believe that our allies share this concern.

Critical Central Europe

Why is it we believe conventional forces can provide a real option? There is now a very tenuous balance in the crucial central region of Europe. The Pact forces opposite NATO are indeed formidable. They are geared for the offense while NATO is geared for the defense. The key offensive ground weapon is the tank, and the Warsaw Pact greatly outnumbers NATO in numbers of tanks. Indeed, the bulk of the Warsaw Pact

DEFENSE—The 200th German Panzer Regiment, Federal Republic of Germany, provides a portion of the 6,000 tanks maintained by the NATO military defense forces. The Warsaw Pact states have approximately 14,000 tanks under their control. (U.S. Army Photo)

ground forces consists of tank and motorized rifle divisions, heavily supported by artillery. These are precisely the kinds of forces one would need for a rapid offensive.

But NATO has a very substantial military defensive capability. The facts are that in this very sensitive central region the Warsaw Pact outnumbers NATO in deployed manpower, 850,000 men to 750,000 men; in tanks, 14,000 to 6,000; and in aircraft, 2,800 to 2,700. Thus, while our military commanders in Europe cannot give us great assurance that, in the event of a Soviet conventional attack, we could with certainty withstand the pressure; neither can the Russian commanders, who look at the very substantial NATO forces, give great assurance to Moscow that they could break through. An attack would be a risky venture for the Warsaw Pact as they consider NATO forces arrayed against them in the central region of Europe. Consequently, while we have our present force structure in place, there is a very limited temptation for the Warsaw Pact to move against Western Europe, and thus there is now in Europe a fairly stable situation. We want to keep it that way.

While important improvements in NATO's conventional capability are clearly needed, in my judgment, the existing deficiencies can be met with limited additional efforts—provided that the NATO countries, including the United States, pursue truly complementary defense efforts, apply their resources to areas of greatest need, tailor their forces more precisely to the character of the Warsaw Pact threat, and have the wisdom and the will to keep up a steady defense effort.

Why are United States forces deployed in Europe important to this condition of stability? What good are 4 1/3 divisions and supporting air forces? First, they contribute quite significantly to the conventional deterrent. Almost all U. S. ground forces are in the central region, where they comprise about one-

JAMES R. SCHLESINGER
Secretary of Defense

sixth of the total NATO forces in this region. They thus represent a sizeable portion of the deterrent forces arrayed against the ready and reliable forces of the Soviet Union.

Second, they defend two important sectors that couldn't be defended with fewer troops, and there are no other truly ready forces which could conceivably fill in the defenses in their absence. They would be vital—in the literal sense of that word—to an initial conventional defense. Were they to be withdrawn to the United States, they would not be available for the first critical days and weeks of defense against attack. Any significant withdrawal of these forces, without a commensurate withdrawal of Soviet forces deployed in Eastern Europe, would seriously weaken NATO's military posture in the central region.

U.S. Readiness

Third, although U. S. forces in all of Europe constitute a relatively small proportion of the total NATO ground forces deployed there, American units are among the very best in manning, training, and equipment. Their importance in the military balance is greater than their relative numbers might indicate.

What is wrong with major reductions in U. S. forces? The answer is that this would immediately weaken the forces in the central region and upset the tenuous military balance that now exists there. It could lead to a gradual unraveling of the Alliance, and in a period of lesser detente the Soviets could be tempted by the more favorable conven-

AIRCRAFT—A Soviet MYA-4 Bison-B aircraft flies a reconnaissance mission in support of Warsaw Pact operations in Europe. The Warsaw Pact nations deploy 2,800 aircraft as part of their military structure while NATO has 2,700 aircraft. (U.S. Navy Photo)

tional circumstances. A simple military "presence" is not enough, unless we are willing to lower the nuclear threshold, and perhaps also to encourage further nuclear proliferation.

Moreover, U. S. forces provide a clear and vital link to U. S. nuclear capabilities The Soviet Union is a superpower, with a substantial nuclear armory, and it would not be realistic for the United States to say to its allies that they should look to their own defenses and then expect that the result would be a satisfactory one. The withdrawal of U. S. presence and support would be crippling.

Europe Contributes

It is sometimes believed that we are defending Europe. We are not defending Europe. We are participating in a structure for the security of the Alliance as a whole, and most immediately for the security of the European Continent. **Most of the deployed forces are supplied by our allies—something on the order of 90 percent of the ground forces, 80 percent of the ships, and 75 percent of the aircraft.** Of course we would reinforce if there were a crisis. But the ready forces are provided in large measure by our Allies.

Of course, from my vantage point as United States Secretary of Defense, I would like to see our NATO allies do more, and we are now working within the Alliance to achieve that objective. But it should also be acknowledged that our NATO partners are, in fact, doing more than they have in the past. As former Secretary of Defense Richardson noted in his annual Defense Report to the Congress in March 1973, allied defense budgets are up 30 percent from 1970, including sizeable additional planned increases in the British and German budgets for this year.

Moreover, the Federal Republic of Germany helps offset in significant ways the costs of our forces in Germany. The present offset agreement between our two countries amounts to more than $2 billion for Fiscal Years 1972-73. A new agreement is now under negotiation for the next period, and I have reason to believe it will be a good agreement from the U.S. point of view. In addition, the European Defense Ministers, at the meeting I attended in June, agreed to examine the problem of finding additional multilateral means to neutralize the balance-of-payments costs that fall on the United States by reason of its stationing forces in Europe.

Finally, we will be examining closely with our allies this year the possibility of changes in the present support arrangements, with the hope of sharing more equitably with our allies certain of the support and logistic responsibilities now borne by the United States.

I will be keeping in close touch with all of these efforts.

MBFR Talks

All of this is not to say that precisely the present level of U.S. forces in Europe is immutable. The Alliance will begin negotiations with the Warsaw Pact on Mutual Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) in central Europe on October 30. We are already hard at work in preparation. It is not unreasonable to assume that these negotiations will, in fact, achieve a lower level of forces on both sides; that, after all, is the purpose of the negotiations. We have certainly made it clear to the other side that NATO is fully prepared to effect reductions which preserve the security of both East and West. But unilateral reductions in advance would greatly weaken our negotiating position and, depending on the size of the reductions, could seriously upset the military balance in Europe to NATO's disadvantage.

Furthermore, a withdrawal of U.S. forces from Europe would not in itself permit, as some people anticipate, an equivalent reduction in our general purpose forces. Whether we station our forces in Europe or the United States, we still must be prepared to meet our obligations under the NATO treaty. As I noted earlier, our general purpose forces are already being reduced considerably below the June 1964 pre-Vietnam War level. Nor would a withdrawal necessarily ease our defense budget problem. Indeed, it may well increase our budget costs if we wish to be in a position to redeploy those forces promptly to Europe in an emergency.

I am well aware of the desire of many in the Congress to effect a prompt reduction in U.S. troop levels in Europe. But I cannot in good conscience recommend a unilateral reduction at this critical juncture. **For the first time since the end of World War II, the Soviet Union has demonstrated a serious interest in easing the tension in Europe and in negotiating mutual force reductions. It would be foolhardy indeed not to give this process, already so well begun, a chance to work itself out.** Moreover, you should be clear that a Congressionally mandated withdrawal of U.S. forces in Europe—I am speaking here of a significant withdrawal —would place increasing pressure for similar force reductions on other NATO governments. The result could be a general unilateral reduction in NATO's conventional capabilities, leaving us with but one viable alternative to an initial conventional defense, and that is an early recourse to the use of nuclear weapons. In my judgment, our political stake and the potential consequences for our security are much too high to accept the inevitable risks inherent in unilateral reductions.

Basic Recommendation

What I recommend is that the Congress and the Executive Branch consult more closely with the aim of maintaining a level of conventional forces in Europe that takes into account our stake in Europe, the progress of negotiations with the Warsaw Pact, and the possibility of a greater degree of burden-sharing by other members of the Alliance. This is the way, in my judgment, of greatest safety and maximum advantage for the United States. I strongly urge you not to consider favorably any proposal for a significant unilateral reduction in U.S. troop levels in Europe at this time.

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Coming Negotiations with 'East'

European Security Talks Slated for September

The U.S.S.R. and its Warsaw Pact allies have long advocated an "all-European" conference on security and cooperation. Only in 1970 did they finally agree to U.S. and Canadian participation as well. Western governments have never rejected these proposals, but they have insisted that such a conference—preferably called a Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe—should be adequately prepared to give it a reasonable chance of success and should result in effective measures for improving security and cooperation in Europe.

For the next two years, the Warsaw Pact members pushed for an early convening of the conference. However, the NATO Ministers viewed the Four Power negotiations aimed at improving the Berlin situation as a touchstone of East-West detente efforts and linked the opening of Multilateral Preparatory Talks on the conference to the satisfactory conclusion of those negotiations. The Soviets insisted on ratification by the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) of the FRG-Soviet Non-Aggression Treaty before signature of the Quadripartite Protocol on Berlin. Ratification of the treaty in May 1972 and the signature of the protocol in June opened the way for beginning the Multilateral Preparatory Talks in Helsinki, Finland, on November 22, 1972.

Multilateral Preparatory Talks

The purpose of the Multilateral Preparatory Talks in which 34 NATO, Warsaw Pact, neutral, and nonaligned countries participated, was to seek to establish enough common ground among the participants to warrant reasonable expectations that a conference would produce satisfactory results. At the conclusion of the talks on June 8, 1973, agreement was reached on the following agenda for the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe:

- Questions relating to security in Europe (including principles of relations between states and certain military aspects of security, such as confidence-building measures);
- Cooperation in the fields of economics, of science and technology, and of the environment; and
- Cooperation in humanitarian and other fields (including freer human contacts and exchange of information, and cultural and educational cooperation and exchanges).

The agenda, amplified by detailed draft instructions to negotiating committees of the conference, was submitted to governments for review and approved at the first stage of the conference itself, which opened at the Foreign Minister level on July 3, 1973, in Helsinki. The brief first stage will be followed by a more lengthy working stage, scheduled to open September 18 in Geneva, to negotiate in detail the topics included on the agenda.

Warsaw Pact Objectives

The most immediate objective for the Warsaw Pact states at the conference will be a declaration of principles to the effect that borders between European States are inviolable and that the territorial integrity of all European states in their present borders should be recognized and unconditionally respected. The Warsaw Pact states see this, in effect, as constituting a final endorsement of the status quo in eastern Europe as far as national borders are concerned. Their long-range goals may also include exploitation of any perceived frictions within the Western Alliance, the reduction of American influence in western Europe and, by creation of post-conference permanent machinery, assuring that its views are felt in the councils of western Europe.

NATO Objectives

The conference should emphasize substance over atmosphere, help heal, not confirm, the division of Europe. Specifically, it should:

- Affirm the principles of nonintervention and noninterference in the internal affairs of states, whatever their social or political systems;

SECURITY—On the agenda for the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, scheduled to open in September, will be the subject of certain military aspects of security, confidence-building. Here two Soviet military vessels are underway during operations in the Mediterranean Sea. (U.S. Navy Photo)

- Promote freer human contacts and exchange of ideas and information, beyond traditional cultural exchange patterns;
- Avoid any implication of formal recognition of the territorial status quo in eastern Europe;
- Broaden East-West cooperation in increased trade, expanded exchanges of science and technology, and efforts to improve the environment.

Long Range View

We see the conference as yet another step in a long and difficult process aimed at solving the complex problems of a divided Europe. We do not expect easily to achieve significant results from a conference of more than 30 sovereign states, each with its own goals and perceptions as to what the conference should accomplish.

The true significance of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe lies in the fact that nations previously in hostile confrontation against each other are now increasingly pursuing the path of conciliation and negotiation. In this developing climate, with careful preparation and with a focus on real problems, some improvements—however modest—could be achieved which would further enhance European stability.

Reference: State Department GIST, No. 3(Rev4), "Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe," June 1973.

Surpassing America

European Community Now Leading World Trader

The European Community, with its increasing economic integration and the addition in January 1973 of the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark to its original membership (France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg), has become a major economic unit. The community's nine member states in 1971 had a population of 254 million, a gross national product (GNP) of $795 billion, a per capita gross national product of $2,985, and an average GNP growth rate of 4.5 percent for the 1966-71 period. The community is now the world's largest trading bloc. In 1971 the nine members' exports to the rest of the world totaled $64 billion, well in excess of U.S. exports of $44 billion.

Community Institutions

The Commission, located in Brussels, initiates action and oversees the application by member states of community decisions. The Council of Ministers is the decision-making body for all major matters. National parliaments in the member states designate delegates to the European Parliament which meets in Luxembourg and Strasbourg and has a largely consultative function. A Court of Justive ensures a fair application and interpretation of community rules.

NATO DEFENSE—A soldier from the 6th German Panzer Artillery Battalion #65 stands guard during field exercises in Germany. The Federal Republic of Germany is working to offset costs of U.S. forces in Germany.
(U.S. Army Photo)

Policies

Progress toward economic integration has been faster in some areas than in others:

- **Customs Union:** The original six member states worked to establish a Customs Union which became operative July 1, 1968. The community's common external tariff now averages 8 percent as a result of the Dillon-Kennedy rounds of reciprocal reductions. This is about the same as the U.S. tariff.
- **A Common Agricultural Policy** has been developed gradually since 1962 and now covers more than 90 percent of the community's agricultural production.
- **Economic and Monetary Union:** In 1971 a plan for a three-stage approach to economic and monetary union by 1980 was approved. The first stage, which is to be completed early in 1974, entails closer coordination of economic and monetary policies, the narrowing of exchange rate margins for intra-European community transactions, harmonization of taxes, and the adoption of common positions on international monetary and economic issues.
- **European Monetary Cooperation Fund:** In pursuit of these goals, the leaders of the nine, at their summit conference in Paris in October 1972, agreed to establish a European Monetary Cooperation Fund. Although its initial functions are limited, the fund is envisaged to be the genesis of an European Community central bank.
- **Common Policies** in regional, social, environmental, industrial, scientific, and technological affairs were agreed upon by the nine at their summit conference. They also took steps to increase their political cooperation in foreign policy and announced their decision to work toward a "European Union" by 1980. The community's institutions are to prepare a report on this subject before the end of 1975.

U.S. Ties

The U.S. has consistently supported the development and enlargement of the community. This policy is based on the assumption that economic and political integration will strengthen Western Europe and that a stronger, united Europe will increasingly share responsibility for maintaining a stable and prosperous world order.

The process of European economic integration has created certain problems for the United States, namely:

- The discrimination against our trade inherent in the formation of customs unions and free trade areas.
- The highly protectionist structure of the common agricultural policy which limits our export opportunities in an economic sector in which the U.S. enjoys a competitive advantage.
- The proliferation of preferential trading arrangements between the European Community and certain European, African, and Mediterranean countries. This discriminates against our exports, and erodes the most-favored-nation principle which is basic to the multilateral trade and payments system. The U.S. is particularly opposed to the reverse tariff preferences which most developing countries associated with the community grant community exporters. These put the U.S. and other third country exporters at a disadvantage without helping the developing countries.

In 1970 the U.S. and the European Community Commission decided to hold periodic informal consultations to exchange views. Both President Nixon and the leaders of the nine at their 1972 summit have expressed support for a constructive U.S./European Community dialogue.

One of the principal issues of current common concern is reform of the international economic system. The U.S. and the community are committed to reform of the international monetary system and to major multilateral trade negotiations aimed at a progressive liberalization of tariff and non-tariff barriers on industrial and agricultural products. We will be working with our European partners for a more equitable and open world economic order in these and other negotiations.

Reference: Department of State GIST, "The European Community," No. 91, February 1973.

Ships of the U.S. Sixth Fleet conduct refueling operations in the Mediterranean Sea.

(U.S. Navy Photo)

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